

United States backing for Aids projects in SA

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THE HIV/Aids pandemic should be treated as an emergency as it was a real threat which had led to billions of rands in human costs, according to the acting United States ambassador to South Africa, Donald Teitelbaum.

"The numbers of people affected by HIV/Aids globally now surpasses any epidemic of the past beyond the plagues of Europe," he said.

Teitelbaum spoke to *The Mercury* after launching several community HIV/Aids projects.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the US is working with more than 25 partner organisations to support HIV/Aids programmes.

Teitelbaum said that in total,

close to R1 billion had been pledged to the programme in 2005.

His government had good co-operation with South Africa on the issue of battling HIV/Aids.

"From a practical standpoint, South Africa has an overall strategy and we try to fit our programme into that," he said.

On the treatment front, the United States programme supports anti-retroviral treatment for nearly 8 000 people at 27 sites in KwaZulu-Natal. This includes more than 500 children.

The programme further promotes HIV/Aids prevention efforts.

The core objective of the programme was sustainability as the Americans were not planning to give money for ever.

